

9 May 1988

Mr Harry Amos
3738 North Woodrow
Arlington VA 22201

Dear Mr Amos:

Perhaps you remember that several months ago I called you regarding a book I am writing on the Phoenix program in Vietnam? The book is nearly done and I have a few follow up questions on the subject. I would also like to ask a few questions about your service with LTC Ching and LTC Secord in 1972 in the ISA's East Asian and Pacific Regional Branch. Please use the enclosed SASE to let me know when might be a convenient time for me to call. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Douglas Valentine

Douglas Valentine
128 Prichard Street
Fitchburg MA 01420
617-342-3452

24 May 88

Dear Mr Valentine,

To place ISA-EAP in context, I am sure that you understand the policy mission of this part of ISA as different from the "military assistance" forms of ISA-Security Assistance.

In general I concentrated on Vietnam and Cambodia; Ching concentrated on Vietnam; and Secord concentrated on Laos. At some time prior to my departure from ISA, Secord transferred to the Security Assistance ~~side~~ side of ISA. While in EAP, none of ^{us} had anything to do with Phoenix. I trust this is of help.

Harry Amos

HARRY O. AMOS
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ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22207

1 June 1988

Mr Valentini,

this monograph appears as Appendix C to
the Cambodian Incursion, one of the Vols in
the US Army Indochina Refugee Authored
Monograph Program. Copies can be seen at the
Army office of Chief of Military History.

Best wishes for your project,

Harry Amos

CHAPTER VII

Military Elements of the U.S. Embassy Phnom Penh 18 March to 30 June 1970

U.S. Defense Attache Office at the End of the Sihanouk Period

The reestablishment of a United States diplomatic mission in Cambodia in August 1969 saw the return of a U.S. military presence, in the form of a Defense Attache Office, after an absence of almost four years. Lt. Colonel Charles A. Wolfe, USA had had the unpleasant duty of closing the Army Attache Office in the Embassy in Phnom Penh in the spring of 1965, when Communist pressure on Sihanouk had finally brought a complete end to relations which had been limping since the ouster of the USMAAG in Cambodia in the Fall of 1963.

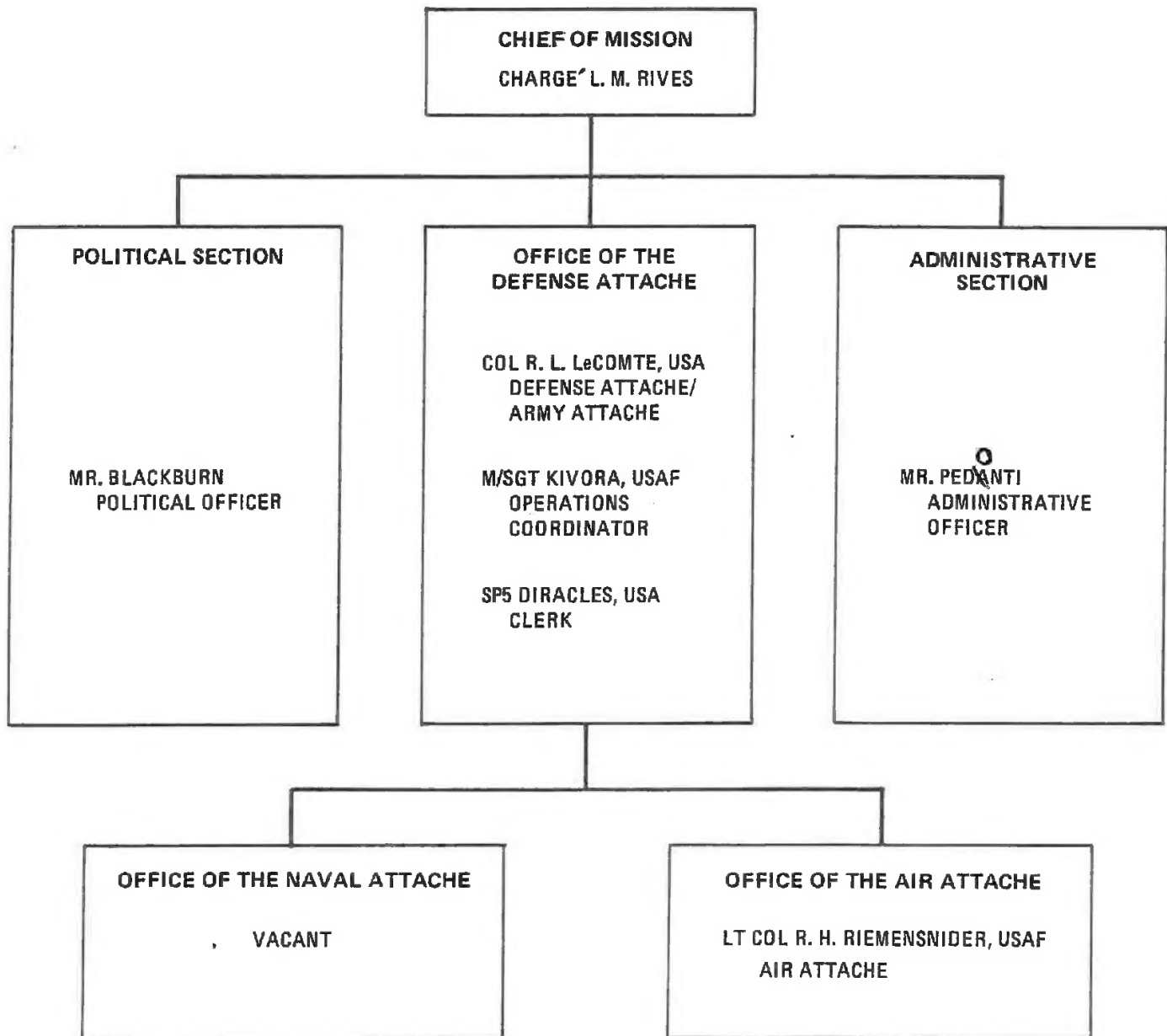
The new mission was a far cry from its 1963 predecessor which had consisted of Ambassador, Embassy, MAAG of some 75 personnel, USOM mission of some 100 personnel, Army Attache Office resident, Naval and Air Attaches accredited and resident in Saigon, CIA station, National Police Advisors, International Voluntary Services (IVS), U.S. Information Service and a USIS Library.

In 1969, there was a Chargé and a mission consisting of five officers.
(Chart 1)

The minuscule size of this mission and its "low profile" approach to representation provided a contrast to the U.S. military and diplomatic presence in the remainder of Indochina difficult to describe.

Colonel Le Comte and Lt. Colonel Riemensnider arrived in Phnom Penh together on 30 October 1969. They had departed Washington in October, still without entry visas for Cambodia, and had to wait in Bangkok for two weeks before the visas were obtained through the Indonesia Embassy. They were met on arrival by the Chargé and Sergeant Kivora. Kivora's visa had been delivered first; so it was this lone Air Force Master

Chart 1 — Organization of the U. S. Embassy, Phnom Penh in October 1969



Sergeant who led the U.S. military delegation back to Phnom Penh.

First contacts were with Lt. Colonel Robin Morison, Australian Military Attache, whose Embassy had handled U.S. affairs during the break, and with Lt. Colonel Clement Bouffard, Canadian Military Representative to the International Control Commission (ICC). Both were most helpful in filling the newly arrived Americans in on events of the recent past.

Contacts with the Khmer and other foreigners retained all of the formality and never-never quality so well remembered from the old Sihanouk days. Le Comte and Riemensnider called on the Dean of the Attaches, Soviet Colonel Balakirev at his home on 3 November. On 13 November, they saw Colonel Keu Pau Ann, Chief of the Air Force and Commander Vong Sarendy, Chief of the Navy. Vong Sarendy and some of the younger officers of the Air Force hinted in these initial contacts that they would like to be more friendly than Sihanouk policy permitted. The official line was that U.S. military attaches had been accepted by the Khmer in order to facilitate the processing of protests against Vietnamese and U.S. violations of the Cambodian border. They would serve also as witnesses to these acts of "aggression."

The Visit to Mondolkiri Province

On 22 November 1969, they were given just such an opportunity to witness. There had been an incident at the village of Dak Dam in Mondolkiri Province (west of Ban Me Thuot). The Cambodians organized a visit to Dak Dam and invited the press (local and foreign), all resident military attaches, and the ICC. (Members at that time were Canada, India, and Poland.) It was the same old scenario; Lt. Colonel Wolfe and his assistant, Major Harry O. Amos, USA, had made a similar trip to the vicinity of Chan Trea in Svay Rieng Province during the dry season of 1962-63.

Riemensnider gives this description of the trip to Dak Dam:

"We were flown from Phnom Penh to Sen Monorom airfield, northwest of Dak Dam, and proceeded to Dak Dam by convoy, one hour and twenty minutes enroute. It seems that the village and the adjacent military

outpost, Camp Le Rolland, had been plastered by a series of air raids from about mid-October until 18 November. It was probably VNAF or, possibly, 7th US Air Force aircraft making the attack. They had pretty well blasted the village, including the school, and virtually destroyed Camp Le Rolland; they'd used 500 or 1000 pound bombs, napalm and strafing to boot. Le Comte and I stayed pretty "low key," and it was Commissioner Gorham of the ICC (the Canadian and a strong supporter of the U.S. position) who asked most of the questions, including those concerning the possibility of the Communists using the area in and around the village to emplace artillery for firing across the border. Sak Sutsakhan, speaking for the Sihanouk government, repeatedly stated that it was contrary to Cambodian Government policy to permit foreign troops on her soil. During our lunch break, a government sponsored picnic catered by Air Cambodge, Le Comte and I did find places where artillery pieces had been emplaced in small clearings in the forest. The Cambodian forces in the area possessed no field pieces that could qualify, only some mobile 37-mm anti-aircraft guns, most of which had been destroyed or damaged in the air attack. The 7th Air Force put on a "firepower demonstration" for us during lunch by attacking with bombs and rockets a suspected enemy position just across the border. An amusing incident — there was a Montagnard tribesman with his cross bow and arrows in the area after lunch. They talked him into demonstrating his cross bow for us. He fired in a high arching trajectory and about the time we expected the arrow to impact there was one hell of an explosion in that direction from one of the bombs that had detonated. The crowd roared and applauded and the tribesman had one surprised and startled look on his face. We reversed course to Sen Monorom and arrived back in Phnom Penh about 7:00 pm that evening."

On 28 November 1969, the Soviet destroyer "Blestiachtchy" arrived at Silhanoukville (Kompong Som) on an official visit. Some of the crew, who were also acrobats, entertained at the Soviet Embassy in Phnom Penh and the following day the military attaches were invited to visit the ship.

On 11 December 1969, Le Comte and Riemensnider were received by Colonel U-Say, Chief of Logistics, and Colonel Sak Sutsakhan acting

Chief of the General Staff. The visit with U-Say lasted more than an hour, during which the Americans were subjected to a propaganda laced exposition of Sihanouk policy. The meeting with Sak Sutsakhan was shorter, more cordial, and not as stereotyped by comparison.

In December 1969, the ICC withdrew from Cambodia. Clearly unable to accomplish its mission, its activities had degenerated into constant bickering between Commissioner Gorham on the one hand and the Indian and Polish representatives on the other. There was also a problem with Sihanouk, who had not been paying Cambodia's agreed share of financial support for this brainchild of the first Indochina peace settlement.

During this period, the attaches, and the entire mission for that matter, were careful to avoid any action which would indicate that they were coordinating their activities with or taking direction from the U.S. mission in Saigon. But the U.S. in Saigon maintained a keen interest in what was happening in Cambodia; for some time there had existed there a special inter-agency Cambodia Committee, with representatives from MACV, 7th Air Force and the Embassy. One State Department member of this committee was Mr. Andrew F. Antippas, who would spend the next six years on Cambodian affairs in Phnom Penh and in the Department.

During the week of 11 January 1970, Riemensnider received a request from 7th Air Force that he visit Saigon. Rives approved but directed travel via Bangkok, from where Riemensnider took the military shuttle on 19 January to Saigon. During a week's stay, Riemensnider met with all military intelligence activities, and attended a meeting of the Cambodia Committee.

The Visit to Koh Kong Province

On 5 February 1970, Colonel Kim Eng Khuroudeth, the J-2 of the General Staff, called a meeting of the military attaches to announce plans for a trip to Koh Kong Province the following week. Even with Sihanouk departed from Cambodia since 6 January 1970, nothing appeared to have changed. The purpose of this trip was to expose Thai aggression in the form of fishermen taking fish illegally from Cambodian waters. Riemensnider describes the trip:

"We departed the morning of 9 January by attache vehicles and were accompanied by armed Cambodian military escort. We went overland on a dusty road most of the way but were then put aboard a ferry boat for the remainder of the trip to Khemarak Phouminville; our chauffeurs completed the road trip and met us on our arrival. On the 10th we visited several fishing villages and were briefed on the problem of Thai fishermen using Cambodian waters and fishing grounds. They claimed to have something like 70 or 90 of them in a local jail. On the 11th we were taken in a big, old scow of a boat up the river from Khemarak Phouminville to a waterfall where we enjoyed a picnic and a swim. As usual, our armed guards accompanied us. Of interest was that one of the guards, who took his position in a hollowed out rock formation near the waterfall, had as his personnel weapon a U.S. automatic rifle (M-14 or 16). He, when queried, indicated that he had purchased it on the black market. On 12 February we were taken on a boat trip and boarded a fishing boat for their run with the nets. Incidentally, the boats that they used to move us around the area were really captured Thai fishing boats, marked MRK, Marine Royale Khmere. In the shallow water near the ports and docks were numerous sunken Thai fishing boats. On 13 February we visited the airport under construction at Khmarak Rhouminville; also the Province Office, where we were exposed to loads of data on the expansion of fishing and industry in the area and improvements in education, etc. We returned by car to Phnom Penh on Saturday 14 February."

Afterwards, there was speculation in the U.S. Embassy that the Cambodians may have wanted the military attaches in Koh Kong, and out of Phnom Penh, while they planned for the events of the following month. On 20 February 1970, the Embassy-DAO diplomatic pouch service, which arrived via commercial air from Bangkok, was cut off for several days by the Khmer without reasonable explanation.

Low Profile

This moment of surface calm, with undercurrent flowing swiftly toward the deposition of Norodom Sihanouk, and the break-up of the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia, is an appropriate one to describe "low profile in

action at the Embassy." The State Department could hardly have selected a Chief of Mission better prepared to head a small mission (whose purpose was essentially to see and not be seen) than Lloyd M. Rives; nor could there have been a selection better calculated to astound and exasperate the hard chargers in the Department of Defense, and in Saigon. A thoroughly competent and dedicated career Foreign Service Office, he had operated a one-man office in Laos in his early service, and more recently had observed the mentality of small nations in Africa. He prided himself—and with good reason—on having the professional discipline to execute his orders as given. In this case they were from the State Department and they were "keep a low profile," regardless of what other agencies may have thought or wanted. During his visits to the Department of Defense prior to departing for Phnom Penh he brought officers in the Joint Staff to quivering attention with the observation that he considered himself quite talented at sitting on his hands.

Rives installed the Embassy offices in the servant quarters of the Residence, itself a three story reinforced concrete pile of the style so dear to the hearts of the ex-patriate French architects of Phnom Penh. Facing from the Residence, communications and administrative personnel were on the ground floor. Upstairs, on the left end, was the secretary, Pat Hughes, with desk and a one-line telephone. In the adjacent room, a large one, were Blackburn and Rives. Rives had the only other telephone instrument, kept on a wooden box next to his desk, and tied to the one single incoming line which all shared; he frequently answered the telephone himself. People downstairs walked up to the secretary's office to use the phone. In the room to the right of Rives were the two military attaches, seated in straight back chairs at locally purchased desks. The attache administrative office had a desk of sorts; the chairs were wooden boxes, as was the file cabinet, and there was a field safe on the floor. Attache personnel passed through Rives' office to get to the phone, or down the steps on the right end of the building, across the front, and up the stairs to the secretary's office. There were no security guards, and people wandered in and out, almost at will.

But if the offices bore a touch of the comic, communications with the outside world was pure grand opera. The Embassy communications section, which possessed no mechanical encoding or decoding equipment, was tied to the Cambodian commercial service in Phnom Penh, from where all traffic was routed to Manila. In Manila, messages were put into the U.S. network for transmission to other parts of the world. Commercial service to the Embassy was cut off daily from 2:00 am until 6 or 7:00 am. There was no connection of any kind with either Saigon or Bangkok, except through Manila.

On 4 March 1970, Colonel Le Comte departed Phnom Penh for reassignment.

Prelude to 18 March 1970

The events leading to the change of government were first observable to the DAO on 8 March when demonstrations broke out in Svay Rieng and other locations outside the capital, demonstrations which were in protest against the presence of North Vietnamese troops on Cambodian territory; they continued through 10 March. On 11 March, so-called student and youth demonstrations in Phnom Penh sacked the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Embassys and the commercial office of North Vietnam. Rives let Blackburn move around the fringes of the crowds, where he recognized several Cambodian military personnel in civilian clothes. Files were removed from the buildings and burned in the street; also several automobiles were burned. There were only minor injuries in the relatively few schuffles that ensued. The whole operation had the appearance of being well planned, moving from one of the three targets on to the next, with leaders knowing exactly what they were doing. Rives and Riemensnider watched through field glasses from the Residence roof the three columns of smoke that resulted. There were a few hours of anxiety trying to keep track of the crowds, and wondering if they might move on the Americans.

On 12 March, Prime Minister Lon Nol, in the name of the government, issued an ultimatum, demanding that North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops leave Cambodia within 72 hours. At the same time, First Deputy Prime

Minister Sirik Matak cancelled the trade treaty between Cambodia and the Provisional Revolutionary Government.

On 13 March, the Cambodians cancelled a visit to Phnom Penh by U.S. astronauts, which had been scheduled for the 17th and 18th of March.

The action of the Khmer on 18 March 1970 to end the political career of Sihanouk took the entire diplomatic community in Phnom Penh by surprise. Communications were cut off with the outside world, and the airport was closed. Rives had to use the British facilities to pass a message to Washington via London reporting what had happened.

There was very little information available in Phnom Penh to explain exactly what was going on. The United States, Australians, British, and to a certain degree, the French, shared what they had. French military personnel in Phnom Penh, particularly the Military Attache, Lt. Colonel Sonolet, and the Chief of the French Military Mission, Brigadier General Vieil, made clear from the 18th of March on their own sympathy for the anti-Communist elements now in charge of the Cambodian government. Sonolet had spent some twelve years of his military career in Cambodia, and had a good grasp of the military situation. Although the official French position was hands-off, the French Ambassador and Vieil were exceedingly cooperative with the U.S. Embassy in an effort to justify some form of U.S. support.

"Columbia Eagle"

Caught without a coordinated policy, and not wanting to give the slightest hint of complicity in the departure of Sihanouk, nothing could have been more unwelcome for the U.S. than actions by several U.S. merchant seamen in the Gulf of Thailand at this moment. The "Columbia Eagle" was a U.S. merchant ship carrying a cargo of air munitions for USAF units in Thailand. Shortly after 18 March 1970, the crew mutinied off the coast of Cambodia and forced the ship into the port of Sihanoukville (Kompong Som). The captain was brought to Phnom Penh and put in detention and isolation. The Khmer were not exactly sure what they should do about all of this. There were all sorts of rumors in the capital: the mutiny had been engineered by the Communists; or, it had all been arranged by the

U.S. CIA and pro-Lon Nol Cambodians to bring arms in to support the overthrow of Sihanouk. As far as Riemensnider could determine, there was nothing on board the ship that could have been carried by or adapted to any of the aircraft in the Khmer Air Force.

Start of Hostilities

The Communist offensive against the Cambodian forces began, according to observations of the Embassy, within a week after the removal of Sihanouk. There was a series of small attacks against isolated villages and small military outposts, remote from Phnom Penh, in Ratanakiri, and in the regions along the border southeast of the capital.

U.S. Defense Attache Office After 18 March 1970

With the departure of Colonel Le Comte, the DAO entered a period of intense activity with one officer, Reimensnider, and two enlisted men. The ouster of Sihanouk brought an abrupt and profound change in the relationship of the DAO with the Cambodians. Starting first in the traditional area of intelligence, it quickly acquired the added dimensions of military operational reporting and military assistance for the Cambodian armed forces. The relationship moved through a transition period of discretion to openness, and by the start of the cross-border operation it was one of cooperation and collaboration. Although the 72 hour period of compliance with the ultimatum had passed, and although there was little hope that the Communists would bow to so inferior an adversary, the Cambodians did not wish to foreclose the slightest possibility that the Communists might do what was asked. Thus the approaches to the U.S. attaches, which accelerated rapidly from the 18th of March, were carried out with deliberate and, at times, ingenious discretion. Khouroudeth began to forward through the Australian and British military attaches in Phnom Penh intelligence information on the locations of enemy troop units. He also requested specific intelligence information from Saigon through these same channels.

Another channel developed in a way calculated to raise eyebrows. One day, about 25 March, the Embassy translator, a young Cambodian man, came to Riemensnider in the company of a Cambodian in the uniform of a corporal. After introductions, it turned out that both the translator and the corporal were not only friends, but members of SEDOC (Section de Documentation et de Recherche) a covert intelligence activity of the Cambodian armed forces. SEDOC wanted to provide the U.S. with the locations of enemy units and supply dumps. At a second meeting with the SEDOC representative, Riemensnider was told that the military sub-region commander in TAKHMAU, south of the capital on the Bassac River, wanted to see him; however, the commander could not be seen talking to the U.S. military attache in his office. Riemensnider was to drive his car to Kilometer Mark No. 9 on Highway No. 1 south of Phnom Penh, park on the grass between the river and highway, walk directly to the river, go down the steps and enter the houseboat he would find there. The appointment was kept --Rives was told later -- and it provided useful information on enemy unit and supply locations.

Before the end of March it was, according to Riemensnider, clear to the Cambodians that the Communists would not leave the country; and, that they would have to fight. At that point indirect approaches were discontinued; Khouroudeth opened up and gave the U.S. directly all the information he had. Riemensnider had a second meeting with his friend in Takhmau, this time in his command post. Interestingly enough, the long conversation touched only briefly on the enemy; rather, he and the members of his staff wanted to discuss the idea of a republic, what it meant to be a republic, what a Khmer Republic might be like.

Cambodian Armed Forces (FANK) War Room

Immediately after the start of hostilities, FANK organized a War Room at the Headquarters, where they tried to keep track of the friendly and enemy situation. Inadequacy of communications at all levels in the FANK was a constant problem. DAO had complete access to the War Room, but was rarely confident of the currency or validity of the information coming in from the field. Some was passed by word of mouth from

villages and tended to exaggerate enemy forces; that from military sources was frequently incomplete and spotty as to detail, and not current because of communication limitations. Often it was obviously exaggerated as to enemy strengths, due in some degree to the desire of the FANK field commander to justify additional supplies and support from the very limited resources available to FANK Headquarters. Because of these conditions, DAO and the Embassy made use of every possible source of information on the military situation.

Target Information and Requests for Air Strikes

FANK supplied target information; and, requests for air strikes on Communist positions shortly began to pour into DAO and the Embassy. Starting with a request from Riemensnider's contact at Takhmau, the list of requestors soon expanded to include Khouroudeth, Air Force Headquarters, Navy Headquarters, a courier from SEDOC Headquarters in Phnom Penh, and even a few directly from Lon Nol, through Rives. Some were so vague they could not be located on the maps available to DAO. These requests were all passed to Embassy Saigon and MACV, without any effort to evaluate them. They were passed for information only, and the Khmer were always informed that Embassy Phnom Penh passed such requests to Saigon for information only. Some of the locations were struck, but DAO never knew whether the RVNAF or U.S. decision to strike was based on Phnom Penh supplied information or some other intelligence.

U.S. Requests for Information on the Cambodian Military Situation

As soon as it became clear that the FANK was going to take action against the VN/NVA, DAO began to receive all sorts of requests for information. Riemensnider received a series of personal messages from Lt. General Voght, USAF, J-3 of the JCS. They contained queries as to specific and general capabilities of the FANK. All carried the priority URGENT and arrived at the Embassy about midnight. The Embassy communications clerk would decode the message and then go to Riemensnider's house to tell him to come to the Embassy to read it; there were no

telephones in the quarters of the Embassy staff. This precipitated a rush to get to the Embassy, draft a reply, and get it transmitted to Manila before the Cambodia communications facility came to its normal halt in operations at about 2:00 am.

The Visit to Chi Phu on 6 April 1970

On 4 April 1970, the Communists openly attacked the military outpost in the village of Chi Phu in Svay Rieng Province (near the Vietnamese border). On 6 April 1970, the Khmer organized the escort for a convoy of private vehicles to take the press and military attaches to see the destruction to the post and the village. Riemensnider describes the trip:

"It was an all-day excursion across the ferry at Neak Luong and on down Route No. 1, almost to the Vietnamese border. Colonel Phan Muong was military Sub-Region commander with headquarters at Svay Rieng, at the time. In Chi Phu we were briefed on the several attacks by fire and the final attack on the outpost on 4 April. An effort was made to gain some sympathy for the Khmer position in opposition to the Viet Cong. Shortly before noon that day, a Japanese member of the press, his driver and another press representative looked for something a little more interesting and exciting by heading unescorted down Route No. 1, in the direction of South Vietnam. They found their excitement only 5 or 6 kilometers outside of Chi Phu. The Khmer pushed on down the road in armored cars and jeeps and found the overturned and burned Mercedes of the press at the side of the road. We had lunch in Chi Phu and in mid-afternoon started the trek back toward Phnom Penh. At the side of the road, as we left the village, were two young men on motorcycles; they were later identified as Sean Flynn, son of the late movie actor, and another American news photographer. As we headed west from Chi Phu, they headed east, down Route 1 and haven't been heard of since."

Communications problems with CINCPAC

In late April, Riemensnider received a surprise visitor, who

arrived from Bangkok, and he carried three messages from CINCPAC, Admiral McCain. They were all addressed to DATT Phnom Penh, and had arrived in Bangkok over a period of about a week. The first message requested information concerning the Cambodian armed forces, equipment, etc. The second message referenced the first message and extended the questions and details previously requested. The third also raised some additional questions, but according to Riemensnider, it took no stroke of genius to realize that message number three also wanted to know just why messages numbers one and two had not been answered.

Although the evidence uncovered thus far does not connect this incident directly with the dispatch to Phnom Penh in June 1970 of a mobile military communication facility, it was certainly part of the frustration felt by all military headquarters at not being able to communicate in a twentieth-century manner with the U.S. military representatives in Phnom Penh. Rives did not want the military equipment, stating that the Embassy had a communication facility, and one was enough. His ire at being thus outvoted was not calmed in any way by its place of installation. Housed in two enormous, white-painted vans, they had to be near the Embassy offices and could not be parked on the street. With the offices behind the residence, and no other space available, the vans were put into the court yard. Here they formed a sort of obstacle course, separating Rives from quarters and office, and provoking a continuous stream of expletive from the Chief of Mission.

Embassy Operations after 18 March 1970

At a time when there were only three officers in the entire mission, it was impossible to separate their work into neat divisions of intelligence, political reporting, military assistance, message writing, etc. It is impossible now to realize the crush of work that fell on these three. There was not only the change in government; there was a war and no real way to find out what was going on; there were completely new questions of military assistance; there was the press, who had just discovered Phnom Penh and demanded time and attention from

the mission out of all proportion to the mission's ability to give; and finally there were the U.S. military headquarters, staffed for combat, with the insatiable appetite for information deriving therefrom.

All of this was still further complicated by the U.S. policy process which could not let all of the players know the signals. As far as the JCS were concerned there was a war on in Cambodia, and there was a valid U.S. need to know what was going on there. Having heard nothing to the contrary, Rives presumed that the policy was still "low profile."

So these three Embassy officers functioned as a team; they divided up the work as seemed most logical, and did the best they could, seven days a week, to meet impossible demands on their time and talents. Rives' own calm and relaxed manner throughout the month of April was responsible in large measure for maintaining sanity and some sense of perspective. Reporting was in two categories: (1) routine matters, which were collected together once a day and dispatched as a single message and (2) questions relating to Khmer requests for military assistance, which had for the moment to be handled by messages in the "EYES ONLY" category. Coordination among the three was facilitated by Rives' practice of having Riemensnider and Blackburn listen while he dictated his messages to Washington. At the same time all three traded information; it was not unusual for Blackburn to have the information Riemensnider needed to reply to a military query, nor for Riemensnider to have the answer to a political question. Blackburn edited the daily situation report, grandly "slugged" as a Joint State Defense message until the Department reminded them that they were not operating at the Washington level.

The following extracts from the daily situation reports give some idea of their content. Note in particular the variety of sources of information on the military situation.

18 April 1970

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO: SEC STATE
CINCPAC FOR POLAD
DIA FOR DIACO 3
JOINT STATE - DEFENSE MESSAGE
SUBJECT: Cambodian SITREP

".. One month after Sihanouk's dismissal as Chief of State, Phnom Penh presents two faces. On the one hand tourist groups continue to arrive and daytime activities of ordinary persons appear usual. On the other hand, sandbag emplacements now guard the Ministries of National Defense, Information, Treasury, the principal banks, and communication centers. Civil servants wear khaki; various streets are closed to permit military drill, and lines of trucks and buses depart with recruits and military personnel for unknown destinations ..."

".. Acting DATT informed by officer from Kandal Military Sub-region that agent sources have reported presence of some Chinese military personnel with VC/NVA in base areas along VN border in Kandal Province ... many VC/NVA encountered in the interior are wearing Sihanouk Army and Cambodian Youth (JSRK) (Jeunesse Socialiste Royale Khmère) insignia to create impression that invasion is internal uprising against government.." "... Embassy had received today three notes. One concerns 13 incidents involving the VC/NVN while other two protest total of 13 border violations by US/SVN troops .."

20 April 1970

"At present, Cambodian troops are battling some 2-3000 VC in Kandal Province near SAANG, 30 km south of Phnom Penh. Newsmen report that VC are using rockets and mortars, and appear well entrenched..."

"Ministry of Information published new tally sheet of VC/NVN activity as follows ...

In Takeo Province, Takeo town was attacked during night 15-16 April as well as PSA TON LEAP ... evening 17-18 April VC/NVN tried to cross bridge east of BAT TOM, six km SW of Takeo town ...

For first time, AKP (Agence Khmer Presse) (government press service) reports a number of incidents in Mondolkiri Province."

21 April 1970

"U.S. reporters visiting DAO morning 21 April 70, described following action in vicinity of Takeo town on 20 April. Two-plus Cambodian Battalions moved eastward from Takeo about 1100, 20 April on Route 204 to retake town of Kbal Pou (VT 8511). Bridge at VT 7911 had previously been partially destroyed by VC but remained trafficable as footbridge. Cambodian troops entered Kbal Pou without heavy resistance to find town mostly deserted. VC withdrew some distance but launched heavy mortar attack, causing casualties among Cambodian troops in village ..."

".. Heavy fighting was reported in area Prek Saang, Vicinity Phum Prek ... 20 April. Parts of 6 Cambodian Battalions were involved to both East and West of Bassac River. Cambodians now reportedly established on East-West defensive line one km south of Phum Prek Koy, and fighting continued during day 21 April."

Another question was what to do about all of the requests that began to flood in from MACV, 7th Air Force, CINCPAC, and Embassy Saigon for authorization to send staff representatives to Phnom Penh to visit for two or three days. Riemensnider recommended against any visits in view of the small number of people, the lack of equipment, communications, and the probable need of the visitors for interpreter and escort support from him. For these practical reasons, and in view of what he still considered to be the policy for U.S. representation in Phnom Penh, Rives turned the requests down. It made sense to them in Phnom Penh; it was difficult to understand in Saigon and Hawaii.

The DAO and Military Assistance for the Cambodian Armed Forces

Riemensnider, as the only military officer in Embassy, was involved from the start in the question of U.S. military assistance for the FANK. The first approach took place about 25 March, during the so-called transition period. A message from Air Force Headquarters invited Riemensnider to meet the new Chief of the Air Force, Colonel So Satto. When he arrived, he was surprised to see Vong Sarendy appear from the back room. Sarendy announced that they were speaking for Lon Nol, and wanted to explore the possibility of U.S. military

assistance for the Cambodian forces. They did not want the presence of U.S. troops; what they wanted was material assistance. The conversation lasted about one and one-half hours and dealt in generalities. There was no one from the Army or from the General Staff present at the meeting. At the Embassy, Rives and Riemensnider tried to reconcile what Sarendy and Satto were saying with the pronouncements coming out of the Foreign Ministry, and to determine if the military officers were in fact authorized to speak for the government. In a few days it became clear to Rives and Riemensnider that, for all practical purposes, Lon Nol was in control of the government, and that the initial approaches from Sarendy and Satto were in fact authentic.

From that time until the end of April, questions of military assistance became almost the entire occupation of Riemensnider. There were meetings seven days a week, at times two or three meetings the same day, and at the request of the General Staff. Contacts were with Sak Sutsakhan and U Say for the most part, and concerned the status of requests for military assistance, when delivery might be expected, revisions to lists of items needed, etc. Requests in the FANK General Staff originated almost entirely with U Say until he collapsed in a staff meeting from strain and fatigue. After that, the DAO often dealt with Colonel Mao Sum Khem.

By far the most immediate needs expressed by the General Staff in those early days were for small arms, ammunition, field communications equipment, and personal gear-helmets, field uniforms, ponchos, etc. Later such items as artillery pieces with ammunition, tanks, armored vehicles, ammunition clips for the AK-47 and other Communist weapons, aircraft, helicopters, naval craft and ammunition, maps and just about anything needed to support troops in the field were requested. The DAO attempted to edit and evaluate these requests, but were conscious of their own lack of staff to answer all of the questions or make the judgments implicit in these requests.

The first shipments of assistance for the FANK arrived from Saigon in Vietnamese C-47 aircraft, scheduled for night arrival in Phnom Penh.

The Augmentation of the Defense Attache Office

The time-consuming contacts with the General Staff, and the rapidly increasing demands from Washington for information about the status and needs of the Cambodian forces created an immediate requirement for additional help in Phnom Penh. By this time Washington -- the National Security Council Staff -- was addressing Lon Nol's first formal request for military assistance. The nature of future military organization and staffing within the Embassy was being considered as well. Regardless of how this might be settled in the long run, an augmentation of the DAO was the quickest way to get some additional military help into the Embassy. There was also the problem created by the absence of an Army Attache at a time when most military assistance questions related to ground forces.

On 26 April 1970, Colonel Fred Barringer, USA, the Army Attache in Bangkok was advised to be prepared to go to Phnom Penh on twenty-four hours notice, pursuant to decisions in Washington to augment the DAO in Phnom Penh. Barringer would serve temporarily until the arrival of the new DATT, expected on station in June. The following day the order to move to Phnom Penh was given. Barringer arrived in Cambodia on 27 May, accompanied by Lt. Colonel John L. Hicks, USAF, one of the Assistant Air Attaches in Bangkok.

This was very welcome help for Riemensnider, after going it alone for six weeks. But the arrivals from Bangkok did not achieve a force of three where there had been only one; it was more like now there were two, since neither officer from Bangkok spoke any French at all. Hicks could maintain contact with the Air Force, through several officers there who spoke passable English, learned during training in the U.S. before 1964. But at the General Staff, where the Army was represented, there was no one who spoke English. This left Riemensnider with much of his original work.

In early May, Barringer was informed of the details of the projected augmentation to the DAO Phnom Penh. Four TDY officers would be

sent immediately from MACV; the Air Attache would receive two assistants, a C-47 aircraft and the necessary enlisted crew; the Naval Attache, who had been delayed for French language training was now due in May. In addition, DIA would send one officer, a Lt. Colonel, to help with reporting.

Colonel Barringer received no warning that the Incursion would commence. Nor did Rives for all practical purposes. Later he related the sad, ludicrous story of how a combination of White House policy and the antiquated Embassy communications arrangements worked to make the President's personal representative in Cambodia practically the last to know that U.S. troops had crossed the border into the country of his accreditation. The message arrived in code. Since there was no mechanical decoding equipment in the Embassy, Rives was left with the personal chore of the "one-time" pad, a system of encoding and decoding whose level of sophistication -- if not security -- ranks only slightly above Thomas Jefferson's notched stick. As the tedious hand work divulged, word by word, the most momentous news of the decade, and charged Rives with the awesome duty of informing the Cambodian Government, he heard the whole story on the commercial radio. His rush to get to Lon Nol first was not even close; when he arrived, Lon Nol had already finished a press conference.

As soon as the official announcement of the combined Incursion was made, Riemensnider was called to U Say's office. After a short discussion of military requirements, U Say spoke of President Nixon's decision to conduct military operations into the border areas of Cambodia. He described Nixon's decision as a true act of courage and interest in the people of Cambodia. His words and obvious deep emotion could not have been in greater contrast with the Sihanouk propaganda of their first meeting.

The desire of the White House to keep all mention of activities in Cambodia, particularly those related to possible military assistance to Cambodian forces, out of the press led to restrictions on access to Cambodia reporting that made work very difficult at the action officer

level. In response to a query to MACV, General Abrams informed Barringer that only a very small group of people had access to the information on what U.S. troops would be doing in Cambodia on a day-to-day basis; and DATT Phnom Penh was not one of them. The caption: NODIS KHMER restricted information on supply activities for Cambodian forces to a small list of people, by name, in Washington. The author recalls the spectacle of the J-5 Cambodia action officer being directed to draft the Joint Staff reply to some supply question, and being denied access to the incoming message -- in the NODIS KHMER channel -- to which he was preparing the replay. Of course, the efforts to keep U.S. intentions out of the press were unsuccessful, and, for ease of work these restrictions were relaxed during June 1970.

Later, messages began to arrive at the Embassy announcing specific phases of friendly troop activity for the following day. For security reasons, these messages arrived at the last possible moment, usually in the middle of the night. Rives would take them, jump in the limosine without chauffeur, and deliver them to Lon Nol. After several of these night visits, Rives was told that he could just deliver the messages to Pok Sam An, the FANK Chief of Operations.

With the additional personnel, it was possible to give more attention to the reporting of enemy information and the tactical situation of the Cambodian forces. The TDY officer from DIA organized the production of a daily report known as the DAILY ASSESSMENT OF THE MILITARY SITUATION REPORT (DAMSREP). Information came from two general sources. The General Staff briefed the local and international press on a daily basis, and one of the attaches (usually Riemensnider because he remained for some time the only person in DAO who spoke French) attended the briefing. In addition, FANK had expanded the activities of their War Room, renamed it the Joint Operations Center, and placed it under the supervision of Brigadier General Pok Sam An. The U.S. attaches had access to this center at any time. When the augmentees arrived from MACV, the operation center became, for those assigned to work with Barringer on Army matters, practically speaking their place of duty. They would go every day to get the information available and come back to the Embassy and turn it into a report. Obviously, they were in no

position to seriously challenge the statements made by the Cambodians. It was a situation which did not improve except as the quality of the Cambodian effort improved with better internal communication, and higher professional standards. The other principal activity of the officer from DIA was to debrief, on behalf of the U.S. intelligence community, those Khmer officials who had been cooperating with the Viet Cong in the supply operations through Cambodia.

The first Naval Attache ever resident in Phnom Penh was Lt. Commander Clyde A. Bonar, USN. He arrived on 20 May 1970 by way of CINCPAC and Saigon. It was about a week before he met the Commander of the Navy at a social function hosted by the Air Force. Riemensnider suggested that Bonar attend because Sarendy was expected to be there. After this first meeting, he began to see the Navy on a daily basis. There, he received a daily briefing on the Navy situation: the status of ships and craft, their locations, etc. In addition, he participated, in the weeks immediately after his arrival, in the preparation of the daily situation report.

Military assistance activities for ALUSNA began with getting answers to numerous questions from the Navy and MACV about the Cambodian Navy. He spent a long session with Sarendy going through their records in order to account for the ships and craft supplied to Cambodia prior to 1963 by the U.S. There had been several instances of U.S. craft wandering into Cambodia from South Vietnam and being captured. The U.S. wanted to know about them and to get them back if possible. Sarendy began to pass lists of needed equipment to the U.S. through Bonar. As the only Naval officer present in Phnom Penh, Bonar continued to work on military assistance matters pertaining to the Navy, in addition to his general reporting activities. This went on until early 1971, when a Naval officer was assigned for military assistance purposes.

During the month of May, the duties of the DAO with respect to military assistance remained unchanged. The office supplied information: could the Cambodians use this or that type weapon? What about the POL situation? DAO arranged for clearance for incoming

aircraft from Saigon; coordinated with the Cambodians, their arrival, and varified manifest. The DAO did not participate in program development; these decisions were made elsewhere.

On 23 May 1970, Colonel William H. Pietsch, III, USA arrived in Phnom Penh as replacement for Colonel Le Comte. After several days to orient Pietsch, Barringer returned to Bangkok. On 20 June 1970, Pietsch, after a series of personal difficulties, was reassigned, and Colonel Barringer returned from Bangkok to function as Acting DATT/ARMA until the arrival of Colonel Harry O. Amos, USA, on 10 September 1970.

Initial Military Assistance and Lon Nol's First Formal Request

The uncertainties, difficulties, and confusion which marked formulation of U.S. policy toward the Khmer Republic are nowhere better depicted than in the various efforts to formalize the U.S. military assistance program for the FANK during the spring and summer of 1970. Some of the factors which lead to this state of affairs were:

1. A U.S. desire to deal with the Khmer as a sovereign entity, capable of developing and articulating their own needs.
2. The lack of a mission in country which could exercise anything more than the most general sort of influence on and evaluation of the FANK requests and in turn, what the FANK did with the assistance once received.
3. A desire to "...keep Cambodia from becoming another Vietnam".
4. A desire to limit the amount of assistance as much as possible, because U.S. resources were in fact limited, and because the U.S. considered the prospects for survival of the Khmer Republic to be highly questionable.
5. The above inhibited the U.S. from being completely open with the Khmer as to exactly what they could expect.
6. The lack of reality on the part of Lon Nol as to what the FANK could actually absorb and effectively use in the near term.

7. The difficulty, generated by Lon Nol's independence, in coming to an understanding with the Khmer as to exactly which units would receive the limited U.S. aid.

Whatever the problems, efforts to formalize the various projects to help the Cambodian forces and convert these into a coherent program began in Washington in April 1970, with consideration of Lon Nol's initial request. It asked for help in the formation of a force of 400,000 and for assistance in bringing some of the Khmer Krom troops, then under U.S. control in South Vietnam, to Cambodia for integration into the FANK. Astounding as the figure of four hundred thousand may have appeared to the U.S. at the time, it must be remembered that it was itself part of an even larger force, as conceived by Lon Nol. A document published by the Ministry National Defense in Phnom Penh in October 1970, and approved by Lon Nol shows that the FANK were to comprise two categories of forces:

1. Territorial Forces	210,000	
2. Maneuver Forces	400,000	
	Army	350,000
	Air Force	25,000
	Navy	25,000
<hr/>		
TOTAL:	610,000	

In addition, the plan called for 53,000 Para-military or self defense forces.¹

Kissinger asked for a quick interagency study of the Lon Nol request, and assigned Larry Lynn and Bob Sansom from the NSC Staff to pull the report together. Lynn formed an ad-hoc working group consisting

¹Government of Cambodia, Strength and Organization of the Khmer Armed Forces, Phnom Penh, 4 October 1970.

of: Major Jerry Britton USA, OASD/ISA; Colonel Harry O. Amos, USA, OJCS J-5; there was also State Department and CIA representation.

Initial efforts of the working group were to get some clear idea of exactly what the Cambodian armed forces consisted of after a four-year absence of U.S. observers, and four years of communist military assistance.

This survey would provide a basis for answers to the questions:

1. What, if any, assistance could the Khmer make use of without the presence of U.S. advisers?
2. What chances were there that the Cambodian Army would be in existence long enough for even the first shipment to arrive?

The very pessimistic situation reports coming out of Phnom Penh, and the general lack of precise information about Cambodia and their armed forces provided a general atmosphere in which the working group found it difficult to concentrate on specifics. This was further complicated by those members whose job it was to provide the political input. They argued the desirability of taking no action on the request, since it was not clear that Lon Nol was the leader the U.S. should be dealing with; there were others, perhaps, who could facilitate the return to the scene of Sihanouk. Besides, there was no assurance that Lon Nol, if left to his own devices, would prove to be the top man. His military and pro-American backgrounds were well known. Dealing with him would not only solidify his position but propel Cambodia into the war at a time when the Khmer should be trying to regain their neutrality.

The military point of view argued that the Khmer were not only non-communist, but were traditional enemies of the North Vietnamese; that the change in government had in fact reflected a large measure of genuine opposition to Sihanouk over this question. From the U.S. point of view, the situation offered an opportunity to change Cambodia from a cooperating sanctuary for the North Vietnamese Army to an ally, willing to help by at least ceasing to ship war materials through its

ports to the communists in South Vietnam. The intelligence holdings were of little value, proving once again how difficult it is to bring the U.S. bureaucracy up to date on a question which is not worked continuously. By the time the group was meeting, Colonel Le Comte was back in the Pentagon, and available to answer questions. His lack of knowledge about the Cambodian Army after four months there was eloquent testimony to how difficult it was in the Sihanouk days for any attache, save perhaps the French, to learn anything useful about the armed forces of that country.

The immediate question concerning the possibility of Phnom Penh falling in the next few weeks was resolved by the group in the negative; but, not on the basis of what it knew about the fighting qualities of the Khmer. Rather, the group reasoned that regardless of their success in the field against the Khmer, the North Vietnamese would be reluctant to occupy Phnom Penh or permit the Viet Cong to do so while the internal political situation still did not rule out the return of Sihanouk and, in view of the obvious opposition of the Cambodian people to such a prospect. Furthermore, the rainy season would set in shortly; its effects would be most pronounced in the regions to the south and southeast of Phnom Penh (the Mekong delta actually commences in Phnom Penh, where the river drops to elevations so near to sea level as to cause it to divide into the Mekong and the Bassac Rivers) where the significant moves against the Khmer would have to originate. Once the flooding had become general, this would work to further inhibit communist military moves toward the capital.

As for the capacity of the Cambodian army to absorb military assistance without the help of U.S. advisers, Colonel Amos argued that the Khmer clearly had some capacity to do this. The level of ignorance around the table was so great that someone suggested that if given a U.S. 2½ ton truck, the Cambodians would not even know how to drive it. Based on his own background in Cambodian matters, and his discussions with Le Comte, it was evident to Amos that the Cambodians could not only make use of some military assistance, but could expand the size of their armed forces as well.

A force of 400,000 was clearly a pipe dream, from a practical military point of view. Politically, however, it reflected a certain logic on the part of Lon Nol, expressed by the following equation:

$$\frac{400,000}{\text{the population of Cambodia}} = \text{more or less} \frac{1,000,000 \text{ RVNAF}}{\text{the population of RVN}}$$

At that time, and in the real world, Amos was convinced that the Cambodians could make use of light, unsophisticated weapons and equipment of the general types they were already familiar with, and at the same time they could double the size of the force from some thirty to some sixty-five thousand; the Khmer could proceed with this sort of program immediately and without the help of U.S. advisers. In time, given the manpower resources available to them, the Cambodian Army could be greater than 65,000.

The drafts prepared by the working group were, in effect, a series of individual efforts taken by Lynn and Sansom for their use in writing something for Kissinger. The final paper was not seen by the working group as such. It appears to have been used for background in the Presidential decision.

The Form of the Assistance Program

At this time the military assistance program focused on three main activities:

1. The providing to the Cambodians of ammunition, weapons, and other equipment from captured communist stocks, from stocks excess to the needs of MACV, and from funds made available by Presidential Determination. For the remainder of FY70, these amounted to about \$9 million, later increased to above \$10 million.
2. The transfer of certain ethnic Khmer (Khmer Krom) units and personnel, then under the control of the U.S. Special Forces in Vietnam, to Cambodia and their incorporation

into the expanding Cambodian Army. The question of force development was not addressed formally in these initial weeks of the program.

3. The establishment, in the Embassy in Phnom Penh, of a military assistance management activity separate from the Department of Defense: The Office of the Politico-Military Counselor (POL/MIL).

The Office of the Politico-Military Counselor (POL/MIL)

The office of the POL/MIL Counselor was established in the Embassy in Phnom Penh in response to national policy decisions taken during the period immediately following the change in Cambodian government of 18 March 1970. The purpose of the office was to manage the military assistance program for Cambodia.

At a White House meeting in early April 1970, the President announced that he had decided to establish a modest military assistance program for Cambodia, and to put a civilian in charge of it. The President asked for recommendations as to who the civilian head of the Cambodia program should be.

After discussions between Secretary Laird and the Chairman of the JCS, the White House was asked if the civilian nominee might be a retired military officer. Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, speaking for the White House, replied in the affirmative, provided, he said, that the nominee was someone already retired, and not someone retired tomorrow by DOD for the purpose. With this in mind, the DOD nomination to the White House was Jonathan F. Ladd, former Colonel, U.S. Army, who had retired from active duty in January 1970.

Colonel Ladd's early military assignments included anti-guerrilla operations in the Philippines and duty on General MacArthur's staff. In this latter assignment, he met and worked closely with 1st Lt. Alexander M. Haig. In 1962 Ladd was an adviser to an ARVN Infantry Division, and from 1966 to 1968 he commanded Special Forces Groups in Okinawa and South Vietnam.

In early May, Ladd was contacted in California by the Office of the Army Chief of Staff to determine his interest in an appointment in the Department of State. He subsequently agreed to go to Washington to discuss the question. Meetings were initially with General Haig and Dr. Kissinger. Haig had just returned from a trip to Phnom Penh, and the outlook for the Cambodian cause at MACV, CINCPAC, and in Washington was very bleak. There were many who believed that the Communist attacks against Cambodian forces would lead, in a matter of weeks, to the overrun of Phnom Penh. Ladd was told that he would have very little to work with. Kissinger then accompanied Ladd to a meeting with President Nixon. The President indicated that he -- the U.S. -- was not interested in the political fate of any one Cambodian; it was not important whether the leader we dealt with was Lon Nol or not, so long as Cambodia remained friendly, and on our side. The program should be as modest as possible, designed simply to keep Cambodia alive. Ladd was told that he was expected to deal directly with the Cambodian Chief of State, and the senior U.S. military commanders in the Pacific area. When Ladd told Haig and Kissinger that he did not want the job if Cambodia was to become another Vietnam, the answer was no ...Cambodia was not to become another Vietnam. The U.S. would help the Cambodians to help themselves; but, after the U.S.-SVN withdrawal from Cambodia on June 30, 1970, they might collapse anyway.

Kissinger had arranged for Ladd to meet with State Department officials, since it was the plan that he serve with State in the status of a Foreign Service Officer while in Phnom Penh. The initial State meeting was with U.A. Johnson, Marshall Green, and Tom Pickering. Their intention was to install Ladd in the Embassy as Counselor for Politico-Military Affairs, with the rank of Foreign Service Reserve Officer-Grade 5. In the process of making up his mind, Ladd discussed the State proposition and White House guidance with a friend, recently retired from the Foreign Service. His friend pointed out that with so low a grade, it would be impossible for Ladd to do the job the President had in mind. Specifically, he would not be authorized access to Lon Nol and the senior officials in the Pacific Command;

nor, would he be able to communicate freely with Washington. Made aware of the State concept in a later meeting, both Haig and Kissinger agreed immediately that Grade 5 was much too low, and said they would talk to State. At a second meeting, this time with Secretary Rogers and U.A. Johnson, Ladd was told that he would have the same rank as the Chief of Mission, at that time, Charge Rives, FSO-2.

On his way to Cambodia in late May 1970, Ladd stopped for briefings and consultations at MACV. General Abrams said that as far as he could see, the U.S. program for Cambodia consisted essentially of providing them equipment and supplies as needed to keep them going. He saw little prospect for meaningful tactical cooperation with Cambodian forces, except in one place. This was in northeast Cambodia (Ratanakiri Province, directly west of Pleiku along French Indochina Route 19) where the Cambodian Army garrisons at Ba Kev and Labang Siek were considered highly exposed and effectively cut off from other Cambodian forces and the capital to the south and southwest. General Abrams was concerned that if those forces remained in place after the withdrawal of U.S. forces to South Vietnam there would be no way to help them, and they would undoubtedly be overrun. While not a large force, the several battalions in Ratanakiri comprised significant portions of the Cambodian Army at that time. Thus, General Abrams was convinced that the only solution for these garrisons was to evacuate them east into South Vietnam, for later return to government controlled areas of Cambodia farther south. The primary problem was getting Lon Nol to agree to the evacuation, and General Abrams wanted Ladd to persuade Lon Nol of the necessity of doing this before the end of June.

For the supply program, General Abrams asked that Ladd work directly with Major General Raymond C. Conroy, USA, the MACV J-4. By this time General Conroy had already established in the J-4 section an activity known as the "Cambodia Special Support Detachment." Because of the preoccupation of the J-3 section with the cross-border operation, General Abrams passed most of the MACV staff activity relating to Cambodia and assistance to the Cambodian armed forces to General Conroy. It was the J-4 section which did the contingency planning

for the possible evacuation of Ratanakiri. It was, therefore, the Special Support Group (SSG) which assembled and dispatched supplies and equipment to Phnom Penh by air and by ship -- up the Mekong. Up to that point, deliveries had consisted primarily of ammunition, medical supplies, and equipment captured during the cross-border operation, especially the AK-47 rifle, already in the hands of the Cambodian Army. Also there had been shipments of spare parts for U.S. weapons and vehicles still in Cambodian hands from the days of the U.S. MAAG prior to 1964.

Ladd arrived in Phnom Penh in early June 1970. Conditions and procedures in the Embassy were more crowded and more and hectic than ever; but low profile resisted change with great tenacity. Ladd was met at the airport by Rives, driving the old Checkers limosine himself -- it was the driver's day off. Every square foot of the office space was now occupied by the growing numbers of personnel, while the "Residence" stood completely empty, awaiting the arrival of an Ambassador. Packing boxes were everywhere, and the one good chair in Rives now very crowded office belonged to whomever got to it first. Although the DAO had a few maps, there was no operations center or room where the military situation was portrayed. Daily briefings of principal staff officers were not held. There were still no security guards (the U.S. Marine detachment arrived in late June) and visitors still wandered through.

Almost immediately after his arrival, Rives took Ladd to see Lon Nol; Haig had alerted Lon Nol to Ladd's arrival. After this initial courtesy call, Ladd began to see Lon Nol several times a week, usually in the company of Mr. John Stein, Embassy Consular Officer. It was during these initial visits that Lon Nol was urged repeatedly to evacuate the Cambodian forces from Ratanakiri. At first, Lon Nol refused to consider such a move, which, in his mind, could only be viewed by the Cambodian people as an act of weakness on the part of their leadership in turning over to the enemy an area -- albeit practically unpopulated -- equal to almost one quarter of the country. General Abrams continued to stress the necessity for evacuation in his communications to Ladd, and Ladd in his meetings with Lon Nol. Part of Lon Nol's hesitation

was based on his belief, according to Ladd, that President Nixon was not serious about his commitment to withdraw U.S. troops from Cambodia -- at least not by 30 June 1970.

About 20 June, however, Lon Nol sent Brigadier General Sak Sutsakhan to get Ladd at his quarters (by this time one of the bungalows at the Hotel Royale, where he could use the maps of Arnaud De Bouchegrave, the Time Inc. representative in Phnom Penh). At Lon Nol's house, maps spread out on the floor, Lon Nol authorized the withdrawal from Ratanakiri, and Ladd filled him in on the essentials of the ARVN/U.S. contingency plan prepared some time earlier by MACV. It would ensure the safe move of Cambodian military units, dependents, and refugees from Ratanakiri east into South Vietnam. The evacuation was successfully carried out during the period 24-27 June 1970.

While Ladd saw Lon Nol frequently, the majority of his time was taken up with problems relating to actual delivery and reception of military equipment and other assistance from Saigon to Phnom Penh. For this, he was in almost continuous conference and coordination with Brigadier Generals U Say and Tappanah Ngin, senior logistics officers for the Cambodian forces.

In order to deal with increasing demands surrounding the receipt and disposition of arriving shipments of assistance, Ladd asked Haig for the immediate assignment of a small staff. This produced two active duty military officers and two enlisted men, who were assigned to the Embassy.

Major William Addington, USA was working in Hq. MACV and was discovered in the snack bar. The story is told that during a coffee break he happened to say something to someone in French. A third party, overhearing the conversation, asked Addington if he spoke French. When Addington said yes, he did, to some extent, his interrogator said, "Come with me, Major." The next thing he knew he was in Phnom Penh.

Lt. Colonel Laurence B. Bonner, USA was on leave settling his family in Florida, prior to an unaccompanied tour in Laos. Within minutes after his telephone was finally installed, he was called by office of the local county sheriff, and told to get in touch with the

Pentagon. With only the barest of information, Bonner was told to take the next flight to Travis AFB, and from there the first available transportation to CINCPAC. In Hawaii, he was briefed on the details of the Cambodia program, and where he would be working. Admiral McCain told Bonner that he would be working for Ladd, that the U.S. wanted to see what could be done on a low-profile basis to equip and train the Cambodian forces. He warned Bonner of an impending struggle between the Defense Department and the State Department over the direction of U.S. policy for Cambodia. Finally, he asked Bonner to try to find out what was going on in Cambodia.

Together with the two enlisted men, Major Addington was assigned fulltime to meeting and inventoring the incoming shipments of assistance. The normal procedure was to check the manifest (aircraft or ship), obtain a signature from Cambodian authorities, and turn the shipment over to the Cambodians for disposition. Bonner, who was fluent in French from previous assignments, began to work directly with Ladd on general policy matters, and to accompany him on visits to Lon Nol and to other conferences.

*Military Activities and Patterns of Coordination
by End of the Incursion*

By the end of June, the Embassy and its military components had grown considerably in size and activity. (*Chart 2*)

With full-time assistance to Ladd, the Army attache personnel phased out of the checking of incoming supplies, and the DAO phased out of the coordination of shipment deliveries. The Air Force and Naval Attache personnel continued to assist Ladd with matters pertaining to their respective services, but in those early weeks assistance to the Cambodian Air Force and Navy was negligible.

Contacts for Army attache personnel in particular centered in the Operations Center and with the J-2 section at the FANK General Staff. Use began to be made of the C-47 aircraft to improve understanding of the geography in the combat areas. There was no program of general

Chart 2 — Organization of the U. S. Embassy, Phnom Penh in July 1970

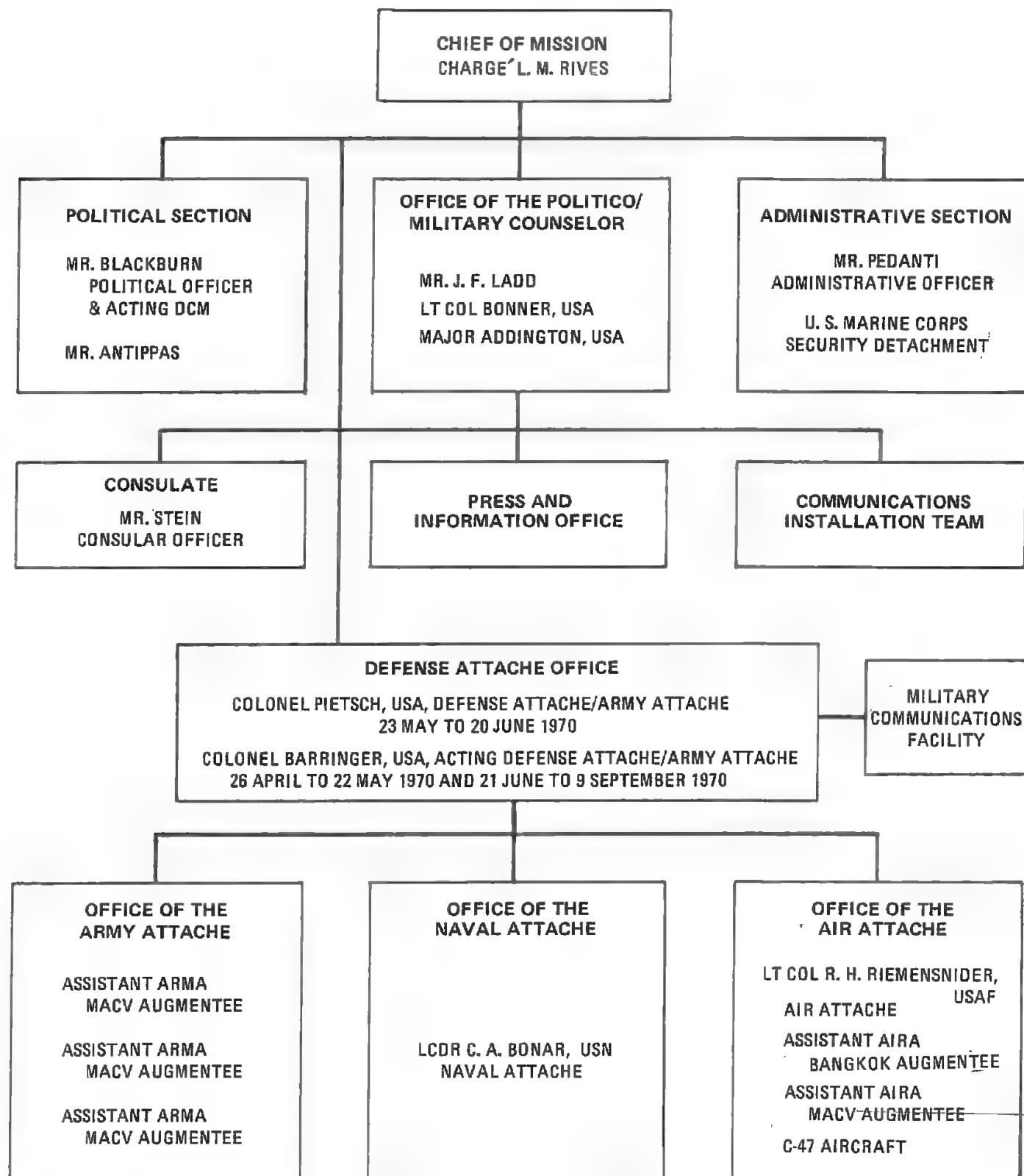
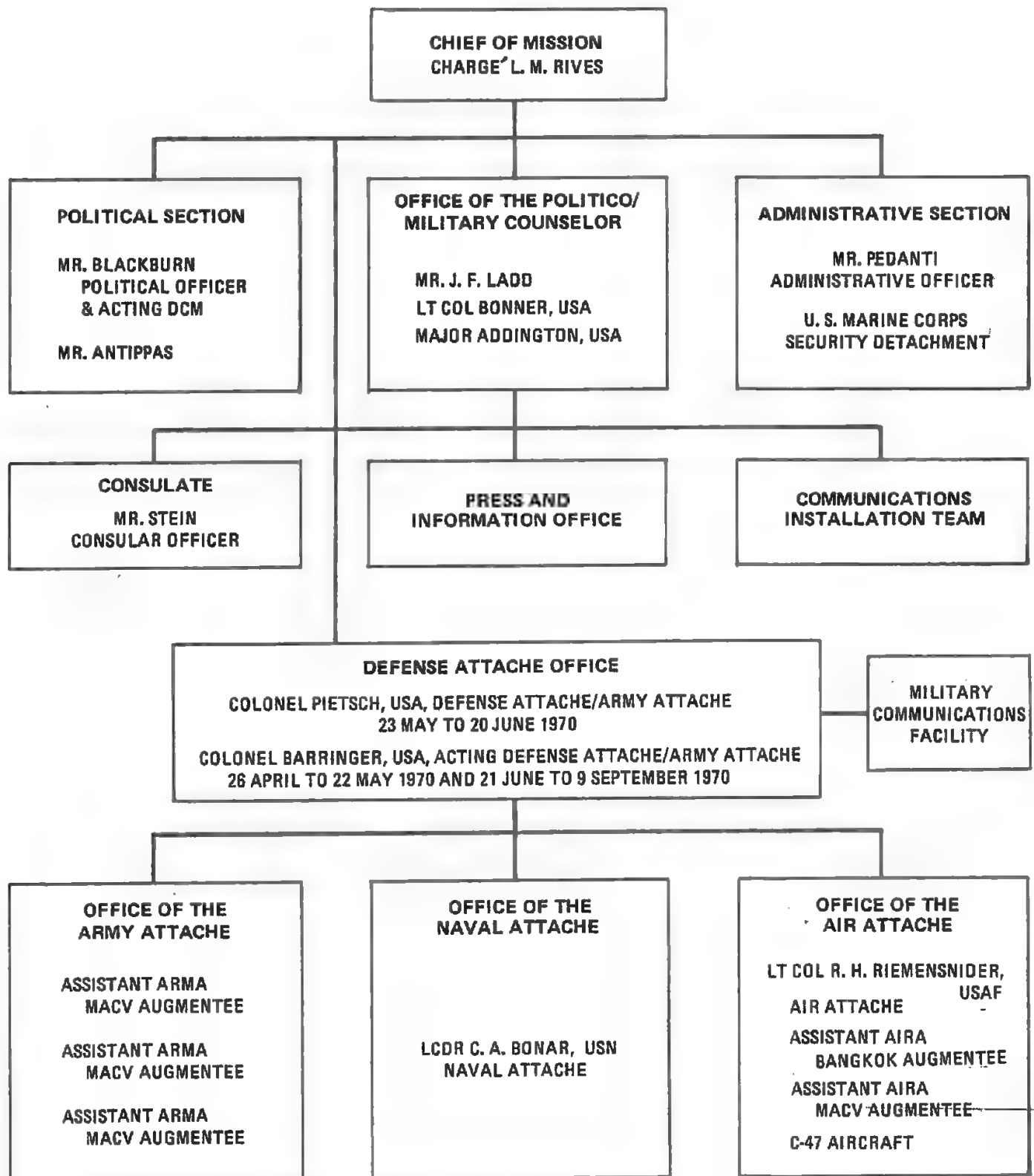


Chart 2 – Organization of the U. S. Embassy, Phnom Penh in July 1970



attache travel, although some trips were made.

The POL/MIL Office became a very busy place in July as the size and complexity of the military assistance program grew, and as improved communications into the Embassy permitted everyone to begin to ask all of the questions they had in mind. In addition to the military facility (by now known as the white elephant) POL/MIL was tied in by telephone with the RVNAF mission recently established in Phnom Penh. POL/MIL office space was found in a converted bathroom on the first floor. There was no safe for the usually highly classified documents POL/MIL worked with. When it was necessary to leave the office, documents were gathered up, put into a cardboard box and shoved in on the floor of the white elephant.

Activity centered around two primary activities: find out what was on hand in the FANK; and, what would be the force structure for the FANK? At that time the force structure question, for all the plans of Lon Nol, was primarily one of just how much the U.S. had to give, and which units could use it most effectively. The FANK had more than enough people. Both parties agreed that first priority should go to the needs of the battalions evacuated from Labangsiek and to the Khmer Krom units moving from South Vietnam. The second priority for force development went to an additional group of battalion size units moved to South Vietnam, where they were given about eight weeks of training and fitted out with arms and equipment according to a modified TO&E, based on the ARVN Infantry Battalion.

Contacts continued on a frequent basis between Ladd and Lon Nol, some time at Lon Nol's initiative, and some time at Ladd's initiative. Lon Nol often wanted to see Ladd to relay to the U.S. some additional request for military equipment; Ladd's visits were often to report the status of these special requests. They also served the purpose of reassuring Lon Nol of President Nixon's continued interest in the success and well being of the Khmer cause. In July, Lon Nol began to make plans for a military offensive to open and better secure the land route to Kompong Cham along Routes 6 and 7. Much of the discussion concerned the expected needs of the FANK for this coming operation, to be known

as CHENLA I. Lon Nol's discussions with Ladd were also wide-ranging, and on more than one occasion, Ladd considered it appropriate to express the view that the activities of Lon Nol's younger brother, Lon Non, were complicating the Khmer efforts to come to grips with their situation.

Because no one really knew, and because no one wanted to get the U.S. out on a limb, it was the practice not to tell or try to tell the Khmer exactly what the extent of the U.S. assistance program would be. In an effort to get some idea, Sak Sutsakhan and Mao Sum Kem went to Bonner's quarters on several evenings to brief him and to discuss the FANK concept for the coming CHENLA operation. Based on the reaction of Bonner, and on the discussions with Ladd, the Khmer were able to form some opinion as whether the resources would be sufficient.

As the plans for CHENLA were completed, Sak Sutsakhan developed a briefing for the operation, and rehearsed it with Bonner. When Admiral McCain made his first visit to Phnom Penh, he heard the briefing, presented by Sak in French and interpreted by Bonner. The concept for the operation appeared to have been well thought out, of reasonable, attainable objective, and Admiral McCain expressed the view that it would be a good idea. The operation, conducted during the next two months, was generally successful. In October, Bonner and Sak went to Hawaii to Brief Admiral McCain on the results.

In addition to his contacts with Lon Nol, Ladd normally traveled to Saigon once each week to confer with the brief General Abrams on the situation in Cambodia and to discuss questions of military assistance for the FANK.

The Military Equipment Delivery TEAM -- CAMBODIA (METDC)

METDC, when established in early 1971, was a continuation of activities being performed in the J-4 section of MACV in Vietnam and of activities being performed by the POL/MIL Office in the Embassy in Phnom Penh. The establishment was prompted by a switch in funding of the Cambodia program from Presidential Contingency funds to funding

from the Foreign Assistance Act, and accorded with the long held desire on the part of the Department of Defense, the JCS, and CINCPAC to have formal control of the program.

The funding problem was not only one of supplying equipment for an expanding Cambodian force, but the even more expensive item of furnishing ammunition to support generalized fighting which gave every indication of continuing long after termination of the cross-border operation. There were two funding options. In August 1970, Secretary Laird told Colonel Amos that the President and he would have preferred to fund the Cambodia program from the DOD Budget, making it a MASF Program (Military Assistance Service Funded) as was the case in Vietnam. However, the general outcry in the United States and in the Congress against the cross-border operation made it clear to the President that a move to place the Cambodia program on the same basis as the Vietnam program would cause unacceptable problems with Congress.

Thus, the decision was made to seek funds for Cambodia in the Foreign Assistance Act appropriation, making it a MAP program. And, in the case of Cambodia, there were some very specific restrictions in the legislation on the President's execution of the program. The furnishing of U.S. military advisers to the Cambodian forces was expressly forbidden. There was a ceiling of 200 on the number of U.S. citizen employees in Cambodia, and a ceiling of 85 on third-country nationals employed by the U.S. and working in Cambodia.

The first commander of MEDTC was Brigadier General Theodore C. Mataxis, USA. He had had previous adviser assignments in India, Vietnam, and Iran. His combat assignments in Vietnam were with the 101st Airborne and Americal Divisions. He was acting commander of the Americal Division in Vietnam in mid-January 1971 when told, one day, to report to Saigon for immediate transfer.

On reporting, General Abrams greeted Mataxis with the news that he was, as of then, the Commander of the MEDT in Cambodia. He said that the program for Cambodia had grown to the point that the people in Phnom Penh could no longer handle it. MACV had been doing something to promote force development in the Cambodian forces; now Mataxis would

be under McCain; MACV would have nothing further to do with the Cambodia program; and that he, Abrams, was glad that CINCPAC would be responsible.

When Mataxis tried to ask questions, Abrams replied, "Don't ask me any questions; you know what to do. You have \$180 million for this year and \$220 million for next year." He added that there was a situation in the Embassy in Phnom Penh which would not make his job any easier: a political fight which reflected the differences in Washington between the State and Defense Departments over the conduct of U.S. policy for Cambodia.

MEDTC was initially authorized 60 officers and men. Many of those initially assigned came from those MACV personnel who had already been working in the J-4 Special Support Group. Of this 60, 44 personnel were stationed in Saigon, and 14 were assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh. In May 1971, team strength was increased to 113, with 23 in Phnom Penh. In August 1971, the distribution was 50 in Phnom Penh and 63 in Saigon.

The formal mission of MEDTC was:

1. To determine the needs of the Cambodian military forces.
2. To arrange for the shipment and delivery of equipment and materials.
3. To insure that the equipment and materials were used in the manner prescribed by law.

United States Influence on FANK Decisions

The question was not whether the FANK would be amenable to U.S. influence; in general, the FANK were completely open with the U.S. after 18 March 1970. The real question was whether the U.S. really wanted to have influence and, having answered this in the affirmative, whether there was in Phnom Penh the sort of U.S. representation, with the appropriate patterns of activity, necessary to make operational any particular desire to have influence.

The U.S. urging was certainly instrumental in Lon Nol's decision

to evacuate the garrisons from Ratanakiri Province, and particularly to do this before the end of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Cambodia. Here, there was no question on the part of the U.S. what they wanted Lon Nol to do, and there was an appropriate U.S. representation in Phnom Penh to make this U.S. view known. The combination of General Abram's expressed desires and Ladd's White House connection was more than sufficient to get Lon Nol's agreement to what was a difficult course of action for him.

In the more general field of military activities, particularly force development, the U.S. was not particularly effective because, in the first place, it did not want to get involved in the details of such matters. Ladd's White House guidance, his own expressed feelings, the concept of "low Profile" are all reflective of this aspect of U.S. policy. To the extent that the U.S. did not want to get involved, the FANK naturally went their own way, developing their own objectives and programs in their own way.

At the level of detailed planning and contact with low level activities in the FANK, the U.S. clearly did not have sufficient personnel in Phnom Penh to carry out the detailed daily contacts necessary to stay abreast of exactly who was getting what equipment and exactly how the FANK were forming new units. This lack of personnel was complicated further, as noted above, by the U.S. policy imperative not to reveal the total extent of aid to be delivered.

The above speaks to the U.S. point of view; there was a Khmer point of view as well, which U.S. policy and analysis tended to be ignorant of, or to ignore. The actions taken by the Khmer to remove Sihanouk from the political scene, and to turn completely around Cambodian policy with respect to the war, reflected the feelings of a majority of the Khmer, and would perhaps have taken place without the added irritant of VC/NVA presence on Cambodian territory. But however that may be, it is an inescapable fact that behind the contact and cooperation with the U.S. there was a Cambodia with its own political dynamic. More significant for U.S. policy, the FANK were an integral part of the political reality of the new Khmer government

and of the way that Lon Nol retained his power base. It did make a difference to Lon Nol which unit received the limited supplies of arms; he had his own reasons, commanders in whom he had more confidence than others, commanders who were more loyal to him personally than others, etc. For these reasons, because of his personality, and in the absence of anyone in the U.S. mission who could in a sense spend full time with Lon Nol, the FANK were never completely free from the sort of outside tinkering by Lon Nol which would have made difficult the exercise of influence by even a large and well organized MAAG.

Nor did Lon Nol, or the FANK for that matter, simply want to fight a war. There were, to them, legitimate and important social objectives to be accomplished at the same time.

Critical Analysis

When diplomatic relations were restored between the United States and Cambodia in 1969 the Department of Defense was presented with a happy and useful opportunity to reestablish military contacts after a break of over four years. Even within the context of a U.S. policy of "low profile" there was every reason to have a well-staffed and supported Defense Attache Office (DAO) as the very minimum military representation. The war in Vietnam continued unabated; and, the enemy use of Cambodian territory was growing and becoming a more significant asset to him every day.

This opportunity was not fully exploited by the U.S. The number of military attaches envisioned for the office prior to the change in government was not sufficient to provide Washington and the Pacific Command with an appraisal of the military situation in Cambodia appropriate to the events in Southeast Asia at that time. After the change in government on 18 March 1970, the DAO, for all its heroic efforts, was reduced -- during a critical six weeks -- to little more than a message center.

Moreover, it was a message center that could not communicate. Although the State Department was responsible, the Department of Defense

must accept its share of the blame for the totally inadequate communications facilities established in the first place, and for the apparant lack of any specific contingency plan to reinforce both the personnel and the communication capabilities of the DAO immediately after 18 March 1970.

It is not as though the U.S. and the Military Services had no warning. Sihanouk left Cambodia on January 6, 1970. We had, therefore, a very good signal, more than two months ahead of time, that something was going to happen. Just as U.S. policy had two months to prepare for change, so the Services had time which could have been put to better use. The Army and the Navy are to be faulted for not having military attaches present for duty in Cambodia on 18 March.

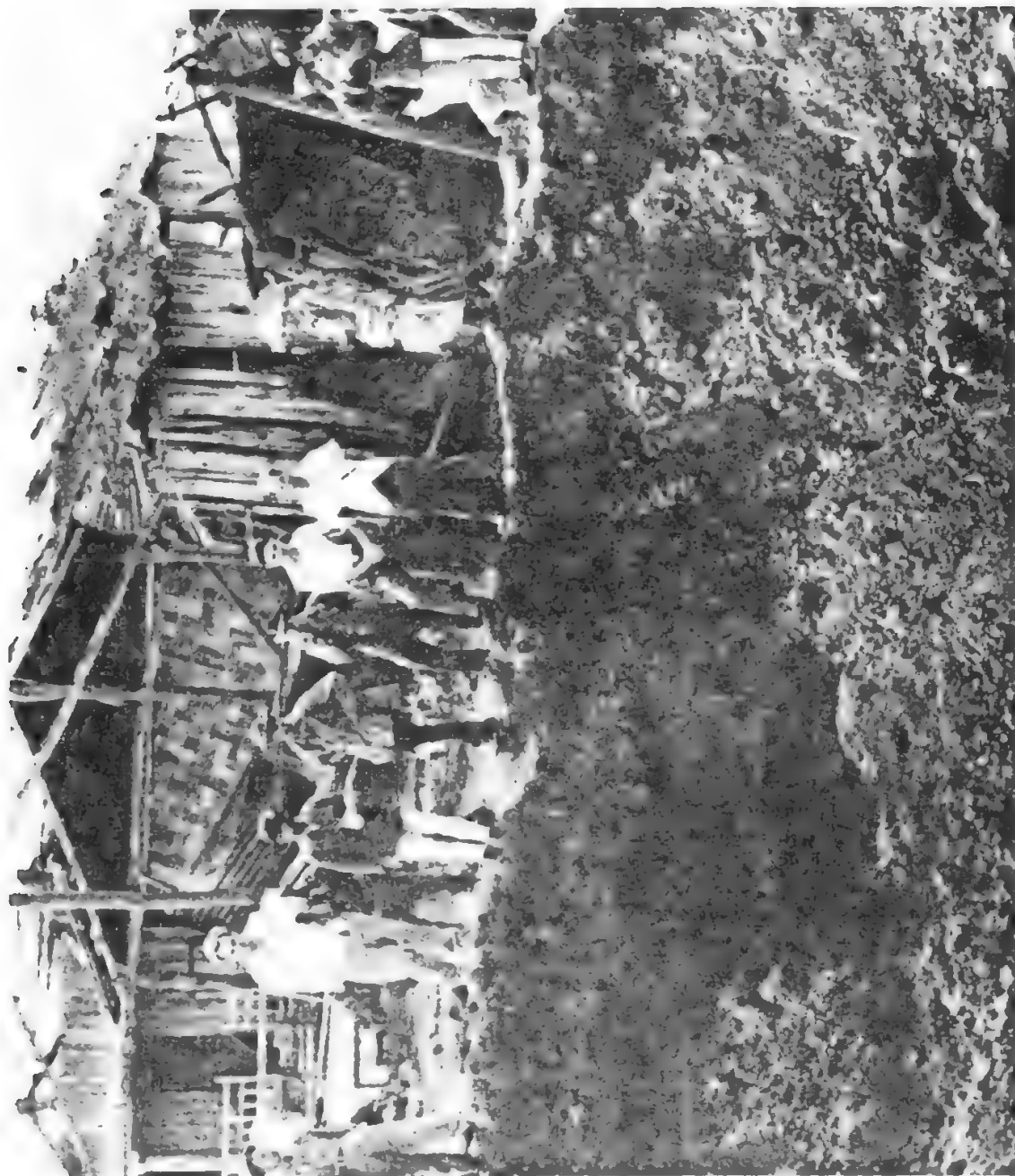
A second point, also related to communication, was that of proper language facility. It is difficult to understand why anyone was sent to the DAO in Phnom Penh, in those early days, who did not speak either French or Khmer. There was at that time simply no other way to talk to the vast majority of FANK personnel, no matter how much some of them may have wished to be able to speak English.

However, none of this detracts in any way from the effort and dedication of those few who were there and outdoing themselves during a very difficult period. This is particularly true of the Air Attache, who had to try to do it all, and by himself, for six weeks. In fact, the functioning and accomplishments of the military elements of the Embassy in Phnom Penh during this entire period constitute an excellent example of what can be accomplished by a few people while working under very unusual conditions.

But if the U.S. military effort was not as well served in early 1970 by the DAO in Phnom Penh as it might have been, there was one advantage, however unintended. The confusion and inadequate resources in the U.S. Embassy on 18 March are strong evidence that -- as the U.S. has consistently maintained -- the U.S. was not in any way involved in the change in government in Cambodia on that date.

The observations of the Embassy which suggest that the demonstrations in Phnom Penh prior to 18 March were organized by those who wanted to get rid of Sihanouk warrant a comment. Whether or not they were

organized is not the only relevant question. Equally important is the reaction of the Khmer people following these demonstrations. Clearly the twin move to get rid of Sihanouk and the Communist invaders struck a responsive chord in the general population. The rally to the colors by the thousands of young Khmer who sought to defend Cambodia against the double enemy of communism and North Vietnamese imperialism could not have been staged. It was spontaneous.



Visit to Mondolkiri Province
Military Attaches and Reporters view bomb crater
behind barracks at Camp Le Rolland
November 22, 1969



Visit to Mondolkiri Province
Military Attaches and Reporters take time out from the Twentieth Century
to observe the employment of a more traditional weapons system
November 22, 1969

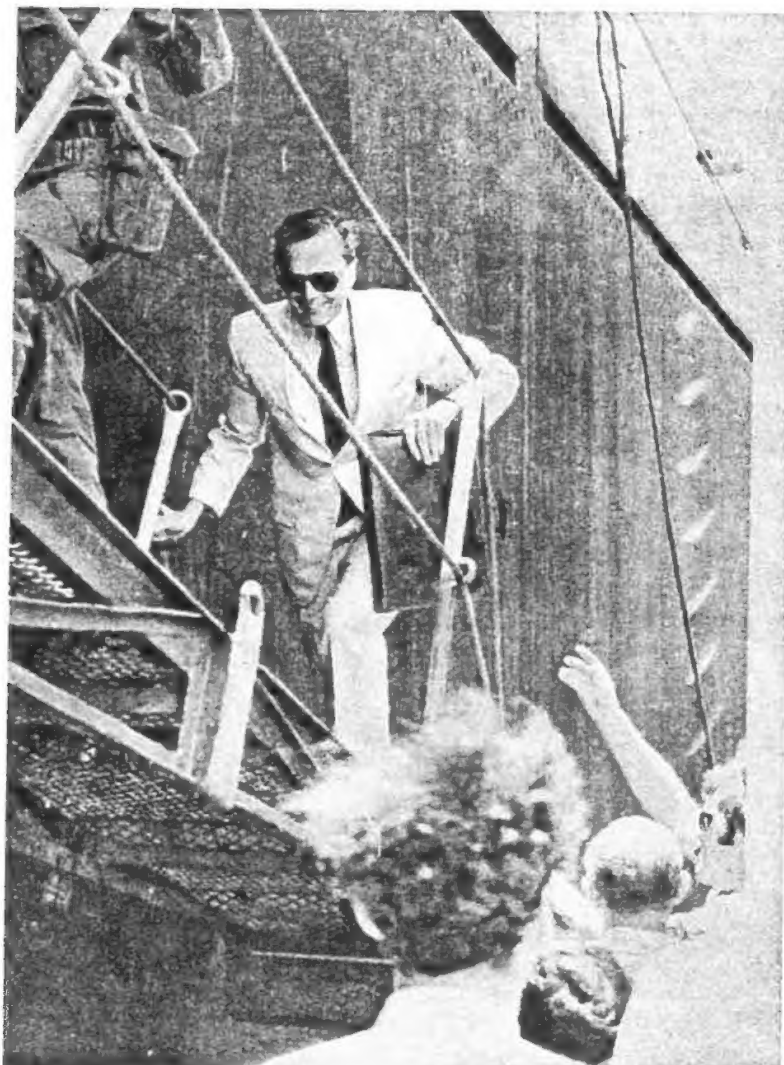


Visit to Koh Kong Province
Thai fishing boat converted to Cambodian Navy use
February 1970



Visit to Chi Phu, Svay Rieng Province
Military Attaches and Press assemble at Svay Rieng
Military Headquarters en route to Chi Phu. Identified are:
(1) Colonel Fan Moeung, local military commander, and
(2) Colonel Khouroudeth, J-2 Cambodian General Staff
6 April 1970

*Intel.
closest to*



Chargé L. M. Rives, U.S. Embassy, Phnom Penh,
boards the U.S. freighter "COLUMBIA EAGLE" at
Sihanoukville (Kompong Som) on the day of its
release by Cambodian authorities
Early 1970



Demonstration to show support for new Cambodian Government
after the ouster of Sihanouk
Phnom Penh, April 1970

Identified: (1) Sirik Matak (2) Lon Nol (3) U Say
(4) Srey Sman (5) Sak Sutsakhan (6) Les Kosem



Lt. Colonel Riemensnider, USAF,
Acting Defense Attache and Air Attache, U.S. Embassy, Phnom Penh
and Lt. Colonel Norodom Vatvani, Khmer Air Force
Photograph taken in 1972